

## RURAL ECONOMIC STRATEGIES

# 2008 Annual Report



## THE MISSION

... to advance the long term economic viability of the rural area, with an emphasis on farming, forestry, and other rural businesses, consistent with the unique character of rural King County.



Prepared by King County  
Office of Strategic Planning and Performance Management  
Business Relations and Economic Development  
May 2009

## Welcome to the 2008 Rural Economic Strategies Annual Report

The 2008 Rural Economic Strategies Annual Report (RES Annual Report) informs the Council, rural residents and business owners, partners, and other interested parties on actions and public involvement opportunities undertaken or supported by the Rural Economic Strategies Program (RES Program). The RES Program and Coordinator are located in the County's Office of Strategic Planning and Performance Management (OSPPM) and are supported by an internal interdepartmental advisory team. The role of the RES Coordinator is to interface with rural residents and respond to issues and or needs raised by rural businesses. The RES Coordinator also supports organizations such as the Agriculture and Rural Forest Commissions and the rural Unincorporated Area Councils, and creates partnerships with individuals and organizations that support the rural economy.

### The RES Annual Report includes the following sections:

- I. RES Program Background**
- II. Summary of Existing RES Program Strategies**
- III. 2008 Implemented Strategies Highlights**
- IV. 2009 Strategies Implementation**

If you have any questions, need additional information, or would like to learn more about the RES Annual Report or Program, please contact Julia Larson, the Rural Economic Strategies Coordinator, at [julia.larson@kingcounty.gov](mailto:julia.larson@kingcounty.gov) or visit the RES Program website at: [http://www.kingcounty.gov/exec/bred/rural\\_econ\\_strategies.aspx](http://www.kingcounty.gov/exec/bred/rural_econ_strategies.aspx).

## I. RES PROGRAM BACKGROUND

The RES Program was initially developed by a multi-departmental county team with significant public input and submitted to the King County Council (Council) on December 30, 2005. The mission of the RES Program is to advance the long term economic viability of the rural area, with an emphasis on farming, forestry, and other rural businesses, consistent with the unique character of rural King County. To implement the mission, the RES Program explores, supports, and/or initiates specific strategies and actions to support and enhance the economic viability of businesses in the rural areas that are compatible with the rural character. In the 2005 RES Report, six rural economic clusters were identified within which the majority of rural businesses could be included and are supported by Comprehensive Plan policies. Specific strategies and actions were developed to strengthen and/or enhance each cluster's economic base. A list of the current strategies and examples of implementing actions can be found in Section II of this Report. The specific strategies and actions were, and continue to be, flexible in order to respond to evolving rural business needs and changes within any of the economic clusters. In 2009, the RES Program is soliciting input throughout the rural area on process and strategies to bring the strategies and actions into alignment with the 2008 Comprehensive Plan Update and changing economic conditions.

### Rural Economic Clusters

- Agriculture
- Forestry
- Home-Based Business
- Tourism and Recreation
- Rural Towns and Neighborhood Centers
- Rural Cities

## II. SUMMARY OF EXISTING RURAL ECONOMIC STRATEGIES

The following Rural Economic Strategies are from the **2005 Rural Economic Strategies Report**. These strategies are being re-evaluated in 2009 to meet changing economic conditions and address evolving rural businesses needs. The strategies and actions are intended to be flexible to meet new business opportunities, and new actions are undertaken as emerging needs or opportunities are identified. The *Action Examples* under each section provide an overview of the types of activities undertaken by the RES Program to implement the strategy or strategies for that economic cluster or the general strategies.

### A. General Rural Economic Strategies

- RES-G1 Inform and Communicate with Rural Residents and Businesses.
- RES-G2 Provide Rural Business Assistance.
- RES-G3 Create Partnerships with Rural Communities to Promote Economic Vitality.
- RES-G4 Create Partnerships with the Counties of the Puget Sound Region to Promote Economic Vitality.

*Action Examples:* Creation of a rural resources website, creation of a Rural Permit Coordinator position with DDES (free consultation); creation of partnerships with the Agriculture and Rural Forest Commissions, the rural unincorporated area councils and other rural related organizations; and changes to regulatory processes and code regulations to provide more flexibility for rural businesses.

### B. Agriculture Cluster Economic Strategies

- RES-A1 Promote and Enhance Agriculture Production.
- RES-A2 Promote Programs that Educate and Encourage Urban Residents and Businesses on the Importance of Buying Local Produce.
- RES-A3 Enhance the Agricultural Market and Economic Base.
- RES-A4 Provide Business Assistance to the Agriculture Industry.

*Action Examples:* Support the Agriculture Commission annual work programs, creation and support of the annual Farmer-Chef Connection conference, and coordination of business assistance presentations for farmers at the Small Farm Expo.



### C. Forestry Cluster Economic Strategies

- RES-F1 Promote and Enhance Forestry.
- RES-F2 Enhance the Forestry Market and Infrastructure.
- RES-F3 Provide Business Assistance to Forest Landowners.

*Action Examples:* Support Rural Forest Commission annual work programs, business referrals and support for the Vashon Forest Stewards, and initiate inclusion of forestry and tree farming as new components of the annual WSU Extension's Harvest Celebration and Farm Tour.

### D. Home-Based Business Cluster Economic Strategy

- RES-H1 Promote and Encourage Compatible Home-Based Businesses.

*Action Examples:* Led the development of regulatory changes to provide more flexibility for home-based businesses in terms of size, employees, and parking. A recent regulatory change expanded retail sales opportunities for those businesses that support the agricultural, forestry, and equestrian economic clusters.



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### E. Tourism and Recreation Cluster Economic Strategy

RES-T1 Promote and Enhance Compatible Tourism and Recreation.

**Action Examples:** Support the WSU Extension Harvest Celebration and Farm Tour, participate in regional tourism efforts, work with individual tourism related businesses on permitting issues, and support the economic development aspects of park/recreation development and historic preservation.

### F. Rural Towns and Neighborhood Centers Cluster Economic Strategy

RES-N1 Promote and Support Compatible Businesses in the Rural Towns and Rural Neighborhoods.

**Action Examples:** Support the businesses and community character of the rural towns (Fall City, Snoqualmie Pass, and Vashon) and the diverse commercial neighborhood centers. Provide input and facilitation during the public review process and meetings on the re-development of the Ravensdale park, in support of the Ravensdale Community, Greater Maple Valley Area Council, and other interested parties.



### G. Rural Cities Cluster Economic Strategy

RES-C1 Create and Sustain Partnerships with the Rural Cities.

**Action Examples:** Work with the rural cities on economic development opportunities, support rural related chamber of commerce activities, and continue to work with the Snoqualmie Valley Council of Governments and the Small City Caucus of the Suburban Cities on their programs.

## III. 2008 IMPLEMENTED STRATEGIES HIGHLIGHTS

### Actions Spanning the Rural Economic Clusters

- 1) The 2008 Comprehensive Plan Update adopted by Council included new policies and text supporting the rural area. The following adopted changes were proposed by the RES Program based on recommendations from rural residents, unincorporated area councils, and other partners:
  - a) “Rural Area” land use designation replaced “Rural Residential” designation,
  - b) New policy supporting our unique rural communities (Policy R-102), and
  - c) New **Economic Development** chapter with a rural section that provides policy basis for supporting a diversity of compatible business on rural and resource lands and implementation of the Rural Economic Strategies (Section V).
- 2) The Rural Permit Coordinator in the Department of Development and Environmental Services continued to provide “free” permitting consultation and support to rural residents and businesses. The Rural Permit Coordinator received support in resolving rural permitting issues from the RES, Agriculture, and Forestry Program staffs.
- 3) A regional visioning effort to protect the rural character of the Enumclaw region was initiated by the Enumclaw Forested Foothills Recreation Association. This report is being developed with citizen input and will be submitted to governmental agencies and organizations in late 2009 or early 2010 to use when making planning and/or development decisions in the region. A representative from the Parks Division and the RES Coordinator are members of both the vision’s Citizens Advisory Committee and the Strategic Planning Team.

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### **Agriculture Cluster**

- 4) The 3rd Annual Farmer-Chef Connection conference provided a networking opportunity for area chefs to meet and talk with local farmers about their restaurants needs for local produce. This annual conference has grown in popularity from the original conference in 2006 with around 100+ attendees to well over 300 in February of 2008.
- 5) The Puget Sound Meat Producers Cooperative, created in a joint effort with King County to support local livestock growers, initiated purchase and development of the operational plans for a regional mobile meat slaughter unit. When fully operational, this unit will allow local livestock growers to expand their sales to restaurants, butchers, and grocery stores because their meat products will be inspected by United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Without USDA inspection, local growers are restricted in sales of their livestock limiting market and income potential.
- 6) The Agriculture Commission addressed several issues in 2008 including the review of and written support to the county for proposed code regulations to address flooding issues and provide for farm pads to protect animals and equipment in the Snoqualmie Valley. (Ordinance 16172, adopted July 30, 2008) The Commission also continued to work with the county on procedural changes to allow for more effective processing of drainage permits to address agricultural drainage issues throughout the county. Support for implementation of the Commission's work program was provided by the Agriculture Program staff within the Department of Natural Resources and Parks, the RES Coordinator, and King Conservation District

### **Forestry Cluster**

- 7) During development of their forestry economic development work plan, the Rural Forest Commission determined that exploring code flexibility and identifying marketing opportunities for small forest landowners are their prime forest economic development priorities. The Forestry Program staff (Department of Natural Resources and Parks), the RES Coordinator, and other partners worked closely with the Commission to develop a list of potential regulatory changes and potential forest value-added products. Work on exploring and developing opportunities for forestry economic development continues.

### **Home-Based Business Cluster**

- 8) In order to address barriers to certain types of retail sales, the Council adopted an Executive proposed code amendment to allow retail sales by home-based businesses that support agricultural, equestrian, and forestry industries. The amendment text balanced the need to provide greater flexibility for retail sales to support resource based industries with measures to ensure the scale of the operations are compatible with rural character. (Ordinance 16323, adopted December 8, 2008)

#### **Ordinance 16323**

AN ORDINANCE relating to home occupations; and amending Ordinance 15606, Section 20, and K.C.C., 21A.30.085.

**BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF KING COUNTY:**

### **Tourism and Recreation Cluster**

- 9) A controversial redesign of Ravensdale Park received significant public input during 2008. The compromise plan retains and enhances the local community aspects of the park while addressing the playing field needs of area sports teams. Numerous organizations were involved in the redesign with the King County Parks Division including, the Greater Maple Valley Unincorporated Area Council, Friends of

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Ravensdale, sporting organization representatives, City of Maple Valley Parks Department, the RES Coordinator, and other interested parties.

### **Rural Towns and Neighborhood Centers Cluster**

- 10) The Vashon-Maury Island Community Council's Land Use Committee continued to explore options around the re-development of the K2 industrial site on the island and possible revisions to the Vashon Town Plan. The RES Coordinator, staff from the Department of Development and Environmental Services, and other county staff continue to provide assistance to the Community Council and Land Use Committee as requested.

### **Rural Cities Cluster**

- 11) The businesses within the Town of Skykomish experienced severe disruption during the multi-year clean-up of the Town being led by the Washington Department of Ecology (DOE). During 2008, the RES Coordinator continued to provide professional assistance to the Skykomish Chamber of Commerce and DOE to help businesses deal with this economic challenge. This assistance will continue for the next few years during and after the clean-up efforts.

## **IV. 2009 STRATEGIES IMPLEMENTATION**

### **Actions Spanning the Rural Economic Clusters**

- 1) The focus in 2009 is to update the RES Program mission, strategies, and implementing actions to address current economic needs of businesses in the rural areas and resource lands. Meetings to obtain input are underway with the rural Unincorporated Area Councils and the Agriculture and Rural Forest Commissions, and more are planned. This effort is projected to be completed in the third quarter of 2009.
- 2) As regulatory issues and barriers are raised by rural businesses and partners, the RES Coordinator will continue to work with the appropriate county departments on code and regulatory process changes as needed and transmit code changes to Council for adoption. Proposed changes should provide flexibility for compatible rural businesses and support the economic vitality of resource-based businesses, yet ensure that the scale of operations of these businesses is appropriate for the rural area.

### **Agriculture Cluster**

- 3) The "Future of Agriculture: Realize Meaningful Solutions" study has been initiated by the Agriculture Commission and county staff to report on the future of agriculture in the county. Input is being requested on issues such as farm industry trends, plans for the future, and what resources or services will be needed to be successful in the future. This report is due to the Council in January of 2010.
- 4) The 4th Annual Farmer-Chef Connection conference again provided the opportunity for chefs to network with local farmers who can provide them with fresh local produce and products. The conference, sponsored in part by the RES Program, was held in February and was attended by over 350 farmers, chefs, specialty retail shops, and related organizations. The 2010 conference will be held in March and is being organized by the Seattle Chefs Collaborative.



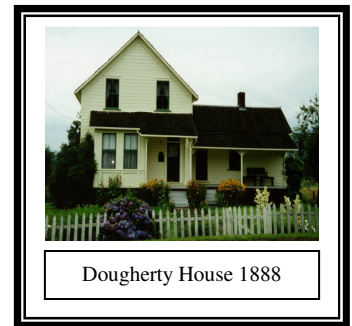
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### Forestry Cluster

- 5) The Forestry Program is offering \$20,000 in Forest Opportunity Grants, generally in the \$4,000 to \$8,000 range, to support projects that will enhance economic opportunities for small forest landowners. Examples of previous grants include organizational funds for small landowners trying to cooperatively manage their forestlands and funds for improvements, including equipment to a small lumber yard to increase efficiency.
- 6) The RES Coordinator is continuing to work with the Rural Forest Commission, county forestry staff, and other partners on developing and implementing market opportunities for small forest landowners. This includes the possibility of producers of forestry products being included in the Puget Sound Fresh producer database. Another opportunity being considered is a networking event, similar to the Farmer-Chef Connection conference, to bring together forest producers with builders, architects, and construction specialists. If such an event is identified by the industry as being beneficial, an event will be considered for 2010.

### Tourism and Recreation Cluster

- 7) Rural partnerships supporting tourism, recreation, and historic preservation efforts throughout the rural area and resource lands will continue to be explored. On-going projects include the possibility of pairing food with wine in a marketing/tourism project in the Sammamish Valley/Woodinville area and continuing work on the “Enumclaw Regional Vision” with the Citizens Advisory Committee, the Enumclaw Forested Foothills Recreation Association, and other partners.



### Home-Based Business, Rural Towns and Neighborhood Centers, and Rural Cities Clusters

- 8) A new partnership between the RES Program and the Washington Business Center of Community Capital Development, along with several communities and chambers is exploring business enhancement and training opportunities in the rural area. The partners are exploring the potential of creating a “Buy Rural – Sustainability” website and marketing model to promote individual rural businesses and regional tourism, which if determined feasible and funding can be obtained, is anticipated to be online in 2010.
- 9) In response to business owner needs, the RES Coordinator will continue to lead rural economic enhancement opportunities and community coordination. Partners needed to address identified needs may include, but are not limited to: appropriate county staff, the rural commercial neighborhood centers, towns and cities; rural chambers of commerce; the Sno-Valley Governments Association; and the Suburban Cities Association.
- 10) RES implementation actions to support rural businesses, rural towns and commercial neighborhood centers, and the rural cities include: meeting with businesses; attending community, chamber, and rural related nonprofit meetings; developing and participating in partnerships to resolve rural issues; serving on rural related committees and boards; providing written comments on local economic development plans; assisting in the development of regional vision documents; and supporting the economic development needs of historic preservation projects.